

Submitters outline fears

By FRITHA TAGG

The second week of hearing into the Newmont Waihi Gold application for resource consent for its Golden Link Project was an emotional time for many of the submitters opposing underground mining in Waihi East.

This was the time for personal submissions and there were tears, strong words, pleas and plenty of involved descriptions about what it was like to live near a working mine — Trio and the Martha Pit — and worry about what it would be like living on top of a mine (Correnso).

Sonja Ireland outlined her experiences with animals — she owns and operates a cattery in the Golden Link Project.

She said the animals reacted badly to blasts and seemed to know when a blast had happened. Her animals would become frightened and show very different behaviour during and after a blast.

"This is the most social divisive thing which has happened to Waihi.

Reading through the complaints from people who are currently affected by mine activities shows us there are pockets in this town where a person's happiness, quality of life and welfare have gone completely out the window.

"The sustainability policy lists personal safety and freedom from fear as objectives for the Hauraki District, yet right now we seem to be heading in the opposite direction."

Other submitters comments:

Frank and Alison McGill: "We feel we have lost our right to come home at the end of the day and enjoy peace and quiet... we do not feel NWG has done sufficient analysis of the social and economic impacts of their proposed extension."

Brenda Kurukaanga said she

was submitting about her property — she is not against mining but she is against mining under privately-owned residential properties.

She provided the hearing with details of alleged damage to her home caused by vibrations from blasts.

Tessa Mackenzie BA (Soc Pol) spoke about the social, mental, emotional impacts on community and the economic benefits and environmental impacts regarding long-term groundwater contamination.

Tessa had experience working in the Environmental Department at Golden Cross, had lived in Waihi for 17 years and the township for 10.

In her submission, she said there was not enough data on the social, psychological or physical health impacts of mining in Waihi and concluded saying the current application was an abhorrent example of the potential failure of the Resource Management Act to protect basic human rights if it allowed mining to happen under people's homes.

Ruth Ordish gave a comprehensive submission covering off many of the concerns voiced by many.

She said the applicant had not provided adequate reliable information to allow informed assessment and had not provided sufficient mitigation. The amenity effects for the east end of town and the social effects were more than minor and the potential adverse environmental effects were more than minor and the application should be rejected.

At the beginning of the third week, Waihi East Ratepayers Group Incorporated (WERGI) gave its legal submissions saying it was not



opposed to mining and recognised the benefits it brings to Waihi.

It was opposed to mining under dwellings where the impact on residents has not been properly assessed.

Many members of WERGI had given personal submissions but WERGI had several witnesses who gave evidence.

WERGI's legal counsel said the Operative and Proposed Hauraki District Plan did not show policy support for mining below residential zones, but rather emphasised the importance of amenity.

There was limited recognition of mining in the rural zone while the Martha Mineral zone demonstrated a strong protection of amenity for effects emanating from the existing mine.

He believes this is a clear policy direction against underground mining in residential areas and so the application is contrary to the objectives and policies of both plans.

At the time *Waihi Leader* went to print this week, WERGI's submissions continued plus other independent submitters were still to be heard.

Hearing commissioner chair Alan Watson said the hearing would adjourn this week. He said the three commissioners had questions for the applicant (Newmont Waihi Gold), some submitters and Hauraki District Council. The questions would be supplied to the relevant groups for them to report back when the hearing reopens March 11.